

# Elimination of Homeowners Tax Relief Grant Credit

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## BE PREPARED FOR AN INCREASE IN YOUR 2009 PROPERTY TAX BILL

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**Zebulon, Ga. (September 14, 2009)** – Homeowners across the state may be surprised when they open their property tax bill this year. Property tax bills will increase due to legislation passed during the 2009 Legislative Session. This legislative action eliminates a credit that homeowners have previously received on their property tax bills which was called the Homeowners Tax Relief Grant. In recent years, this credit reduced most property tax bills by \$200 - \$300 annually.

*“At a time when many homeowners are carefully watching their spending, and the county is trying to assist them, we want to advise Pike County residents to be prepared for an increase in their property tax bill,” said Stephen A. Marro, County Manager. “Since that increase is coming from an action that was taken at the state level, we want people to have the facts. The Board of Commissioners reacted to calls from the citizens by lowering Ad Valorem taxes. Now the Legislature is raising your taxes with no regard for the wants, needs or expectations of the county or its citizens.”*

The Homeowners Tax Relief Grant (HTRG) program was established through legislation passed in 1999. Since that time, the Georgia General Assembly and the Governor have funded this credit and provided a reimbursement for it to local governments. This credit appeared as a line item on the property tax bill and was subtracted from the total amount of property tax that the homeowner would otherwise have to pay. It did not change the amount of property tax owed, it simply reduced the amount that the homeowner had to pay out of pocket. The benefits of this program were entirely for the homeowner.

Due to financial strains on the state budget, the Georgia General Assembly and the Governor did not fund this credit for the 2009 property tax bills. While House Bill 143 established that the credit could be offered again sometime in the future, it will not be implemented again until state revenues increase significantly.

*“In Pike County, we have reduced our budget by 1.3 mills in the up-coming budget cycle and proposed a budget reduction of \$2 million less than last year. This is coupled to an attempt by the Board of Commissioners to change the fiscal year from November/October of each year to better co-inside with the State of Georgia’s fiscal year of July/June,” said Stephen Marro, County Manager. “While we are not raising the millage rate for the county this year, most residences will still see an increase in tax payments due to actions taken by the State*

*Legislature in eliminating this year's Homeowner Tax Relief Program. The taxpayer needs to realize this increase in tax payment is due to legislative actions and not by any action taken by the Pike County Board of Commissioners."*

Property taxes are the primary source of revenue to fund services provided by county government. They provide for the health, safety and welfare of the community. Counties use these funds to provide services such as police and fire protection, emergency management, water and sewer infrastructure, public health departments, jails, courts, and parks and recreation facilities.

"County government is facing tough financial times and counties are feeling the impact of the economic downturn which is lowering property tax assessments and reducing the revenues available to fund county operations," said Jerry Griffin, Executive Director of the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG). "While people don't like paying property taxes, they need to realize that many of the qualities that they enjoy about their community and the services provided, that we all take for granted like police and fire protection, are a direct result of the investment by local governments."

For more information on your property tax bill, contact the Pike County Tax Commissioner's Office at (770) 567-2001. The Association County Commissioners of Georgia has also established a website on behalf of local government to help explain property taxes. For more information, go to [www.factsaboutpropertytax.com](http://www.factsaboutpropertytax.com).

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